
**PRESENTATION BY MR LOURIE BOSMAN, PRESIDENT AGRI SA,
WEDNESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2008, PRETORIA.
HE ALSO SERVES ON THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS (IFAP) AND CHAIRS THE IFAP'S MEAT AND
FEEDS COMMITTEE.**

GM CROP PRODUCTION UP 30% IN RSA

According to seed companies' sales of GM seed and in accordance with a survey by FoodNCropBio in terms of a Maize Trust project, the production of GM crops in South Africa continues to expand at an impressive rate. In 2007, maize, soya and cotton area planted increased by 30% to 1.8 million ha (1.4 million 2006). Maize topped the list with 1.6 million ha (1.2 million), up 33%. Of the total maize crop 57% was GM.

White GM maize totalled 1 040 000 ha, an increase of 48% over 2006/7, representing a market share of 62%. Yellow maize increased from 528 000 ha to 567 000 ha, up 7%, with a market share of 51%.

GM soya was produced on 144 000 ha, 80% of 180 000 ha. GM cotton was produced on 9 000 ha, 90% of 10 000 ha.

South Africa has retained its eighth position amongst 13 biotech megacountries worldwide.

"These achievements once again illustrate the confidence thousands of South African commercial and emergent farmers and consumers have in crop biotechnology. Agri SA is positive about genetically modified agricultural crops and is enthusiastic about the contribution they can make in future towards increased production.

"The regulatory framework within which these decisions are taken in South Africa are however vital in maintaining safety and trust, and must always be kept in mind.

"Irrespective of the positive acceptance of GMO crops in South Africa by farmers and consumers there is still room in our agriculture for non-GMOs and organic food production," says Mr Lourie Bosman, president Agri SA.

Speaking at a press conference in Pretoria, he said that according to figures released by Clive James, chairman of ISAAA (International

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Service of the Acquisition for Agri-Biotech Applications), the global adoption of biotech crops in 2007 continued to show an impressive 12% growth. Some 12 million farmers in 23 countries on six continents planted 114.3 million hectares to GM crops.

Some 90% or 11 million of these farmers are resource-poor farmers in 12 developing countries. Since the adoption of biotech crops in 1996, a cumulative 690 million ha have been planted globally to GM crops.

South Africa is not lagging behind. 2007 marked the tenth year of the adoption of biotech crops. According to records of the last nine years, a cumulative 4.5 million ha have been planted to GM maize. The average yield benefit is 10.6% (Gouse & Kirsten 2003).

Cumulative value of GM maize at farmer price totalled R21.631 billion. Cumulative GM maize produced was 14.673 million MT. The added benefit of 10.6% yield increases over nine years amounted to an estimated R2 billion.

“This maize has been consumed, in one way or another, every year by 40 million South Africans without any substantiated medical or scientific adverse effects to humans, animals or the environment,” said Bosman.

The most popular GM trait in South Africa was Bt insect resistant maize, 1.1 million ha, followed by RR herbicide tolerant maize at 373 000 ha. Stacked traits Bt+RR sales commenced in 2007 and achieved 80 000 ha.

Globally, the USA grew 57.7 million ha; Argentina 19.1 million ha; Brazil 15 million ha; Canada 7 million ha; India 6.2 million ha and China 3.8 million ha, continue to be the principal adopters of biotech crops.

Brazil experienced the greatest absolute growth of 3.5 million ha. India experienced the highest proportional increase for the third consecutive year with an increase of 63%. Cotton is grown by 3.8 million resource-poor Indian farmers. Yields have increased by 50%. Insecticide application was reduced by 50%.

Europe surpassed 100 000 ha of biotech crops for the first time, a 77% growth. Spain leads with 70 000 ha maize. The biggest growth was in France with 22 000 ha maize, up from 5 000 ha in 2006.

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Worldwide, soya continued to be the principal biotech crop, 58.6 million ha (51% of global area) followed by fast growing maize 35.2 million ha, cotton 15 million ha, and canola 5.5 million ha.

Herbicide tolerance (HT) has consistently been the dominant trait, deployed in soya, maize, cotton, canola and lucerne, and represented 63% of the 114.3 million ha. Stacked double and triple traits occupied 21.8 million ha.

Economic and environmental benefits

Global economic benefits for biotech crop farmers in 2007 are estimated at more than R49 billion (US\$7 billion). The cumulative reduction in pesticides for the period 1996–2006 is estimated at 289 000 MT.

Future prospects

The first drought tolerant maize varieties are expected to be commercialised in 2011. The trait has already been incorporated in several other crops. Field trials are already being conducted in South Africa.

It is anticipated that the number of countries adopting biotech crops will double by 2015, involving some 100 million farmers.

Burkina Faso, Egypt and Vietnam are most likely to approve biotech crops in the near future.

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